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ABSTRACT

The overall participation and performance of disabled students in vocational education and training (VET) programs in Australia in 2000 were analyzed. The analysis was based on data from National Centre for Vocational Education Research collections and surveys. The following were among the key findings: (1) the number of VET students reporting a disability increased from 47,300 in 1996 to 62,100 in 2000; (2) the percentage of VET students reporting a disability decreased from 5.1% in 1996 to 4.5% in 2000; (3) VET students who reported a disability in 2000 tended to be older than other VET students and were more likely to have lower levels of schooling; (4) VET students who reported a disability in 2000 were more likely to be studying enabling courses than were other VET students; (5) VET students reporting a disability achieved a smaller proportion of successful subject outcomes in 2000 than did VET students overall; (6) graduating from a technical and further education (TAFE) course in 2000 did not appear to have much effect on employment outcomes for those who reported a disability; and (7) those TAFE graduates reporting a disability who did manage to secure employment did not achieve the same level of income as Australians as a whole. (Contains 10 tables/figures and 7 references.) (MN)

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NCVER

Students with a disability in vocational education and training

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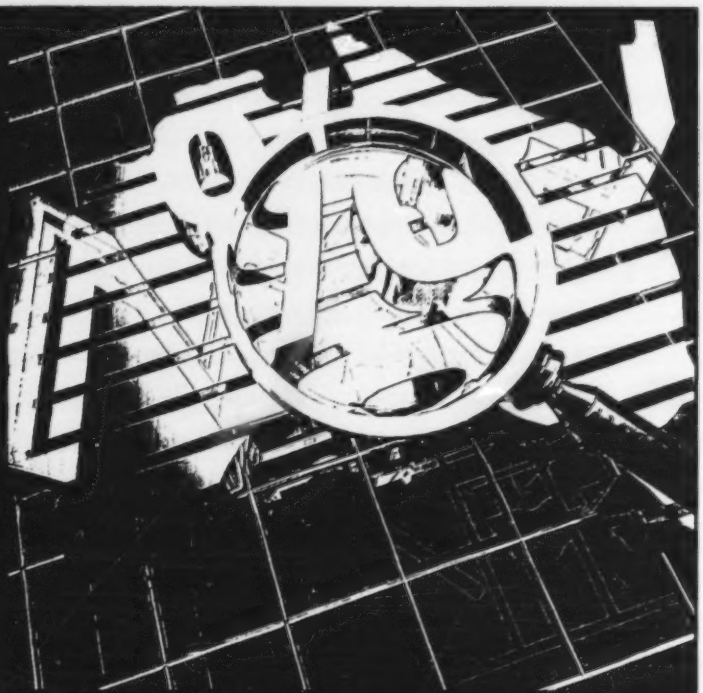
At a glance

Vocational education and training (VET) provides a pathway to employment for a large proportion of the Australian workforce, including many who have identified health issues which may present barriers to obtaining and maintaining fulfilling employment. While it is not possible to accurately gauge an appropriate labour force participation rate for people with a disability (due to the varying levels of impairment and restriction), it is generally perceived that disabled people have inequitable employment outcomes compared with Australians generally.



VET provides a means by which people with a disability can improve their chances of obtaining meaningful employment, making their level of participation and success in VET an important factor in addressing employment inequity. This publication analyses the overall participation and performance of VET students reporting a disability in 2000, utilising data from NCVER collections and surveys. The relevant participation and performance data for all VET students is also included to provide a basis for comparison.

Key points

- The number of VET students reporting a disability increased from 47 300 in 1996 to 62 100 in 2000.
- As a proportion of the total VET population the percentage of students reporting a disability decreased from 5.1% in 1996 to 4.5% in 2000.
- VET students who reported a disability in 2000 tended to be older than other VET students, and were also more likely to have lower levels of schooling.
- In 2000, VET students who reported a disability were more likely to be studying enabling courses than all VET students.
- VET students reporting a disability achieved a smaller proportion of successful subject outcomes in 2000 than VET students overall.
- Graduating from a TAFE course in 2000 did not appear to have much effect on employment outcomes for those who reported a disability.
- TAFE graduates reporting a disability who did manage to secure employment, did not achieve the same level of income as Australians as a whole.

Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics

2000

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Defining disability

Under the Australian VET Management Information and Statistical Standard (AVETMISS), VET enrolment forms in should include the following question regarding disability: *"Do you consider yourself to have a permanent and significant disability?"*

It is up to individual students to identify whether or not they have a permanent or significant disability and what kind of disability or disabilities they have. The types of disability are listed on enrolment forms as:

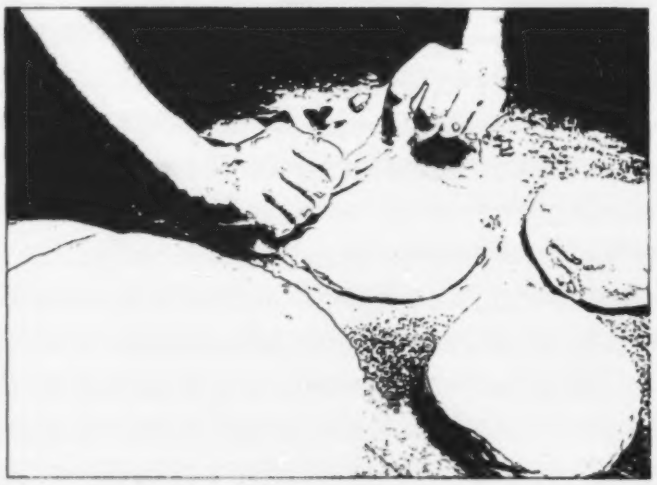
- visual/sight/seeing
- hearing
- physical
- intellectual
- chronic illness
- other disability

This information has been collected under AVETMISS since 1994.

Participation

In 2000, 62 100 of the students engaged in vocational education and training (VET) reported having a disability or disabilities. This was an increase of nearly 15 000 students from the 47 300 students who reported having a disability in 1996. However, the proportion of the VET population[1] reporting a disability fell over this time (from 5.1% in 1996 to 4.5% in 2000). Males accounted for 53% of VET students reporting a disability in 2000 (compared with 51% of all VET students).

At the State level, New South Wales had the largest proportion of VET students reporting a disability in 2000 (5.3%), closely followed by the ACT and Queensland (4.7% and 4.6% respectively). The Northern Territory had the smallest proportion in 2000, with only 2.9% of VET students reporting that they had a disability.



[1] Where disability status was known.

Table 1: VET students who reported a disability, by State, 1996 and 2000.

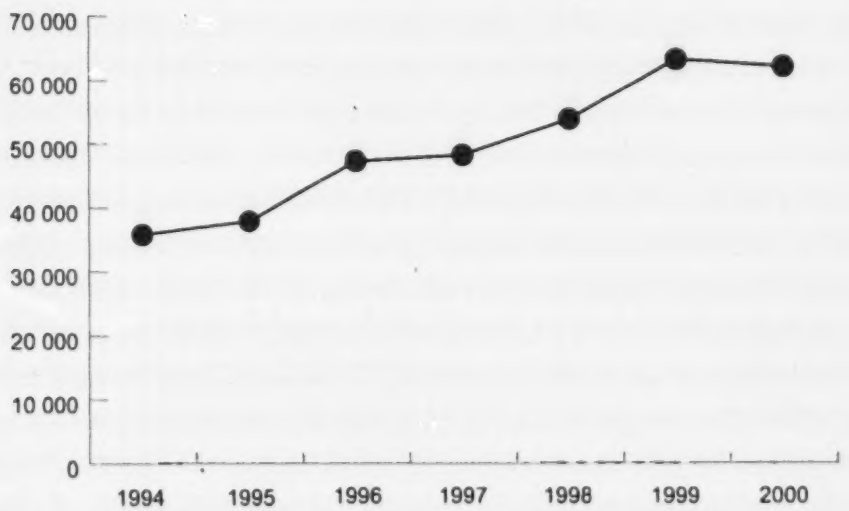
	1996		2000	
	Students reporting a disability	As proportion of all(a) students	Students reporting a disability	As proportion of all(a) students
	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	17 803	5.3	23 929	5.3
Vic.	16 732	5.9	16 906	3.8
Qld.	5 989	3.7	9 939	4.6
WA	1 733	4.6	3 355	3.7
SA	2 814	4.9	5 081	4.2
Tas.	1 101	5.1	1 355	4.5
NT	323	3.2	605	2.9
ACT	816	5.5	912	4.7
Australia	**47 311**	**5.1**	**62 082**	**4.5**

(a) Excludes students whose disability status is not known.
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 1996 and 2000

Growth patterns and trends

Between 1995 and 1999, the numbers of VET students reporting a disability grew steadily, at approximately the same rate as VET student numbers overall. However, between 1999 and 2000 the number of students reporting a disability fell from 63 200 to 62 100. There was little change in the proportion of VET students reporting a disability between 1995 and 2000, varying at a level between 4% and 5%.

Figure 1: VET students reporting a disability, 1994–2000



Source: NCVER National VET provider collection

Disability type

The types of disabilities reported by VET students in 1996 and 2000 are detailed below (Table 2). While there appeared to be minor changes in the proportion of some disability types over this period, the high proportion of disabilities reported as 'other' or 'unspecified' (over 30% in both 1996 and 2000) makes it difficult to clearly identify any trends.

Table 2: Types of disabilities reported by VET students, 1996 and 2000

	1996		2000	
	No.	%	No.	%
Visual Disability	8 738	17.5	10 674	15.5
Hearing Disability	5 443	10.9	7 913	11.5
Physical Disability	9 389	18.8	14 289	20.7
Intellectual Disability	7 842	15.7	8 649	12.5
Chronic Illness	3 125	6.2	5 579	8.1
Other Disability	7 171	14.3	15 732	22.8
Unspec Disability	8 296	16.6	6 194	9.0
Total disabilities reported	**50 004**	**100.0**	**69 030**	**100.0**
Total students reporting a disability(a)	47 313		62 082	

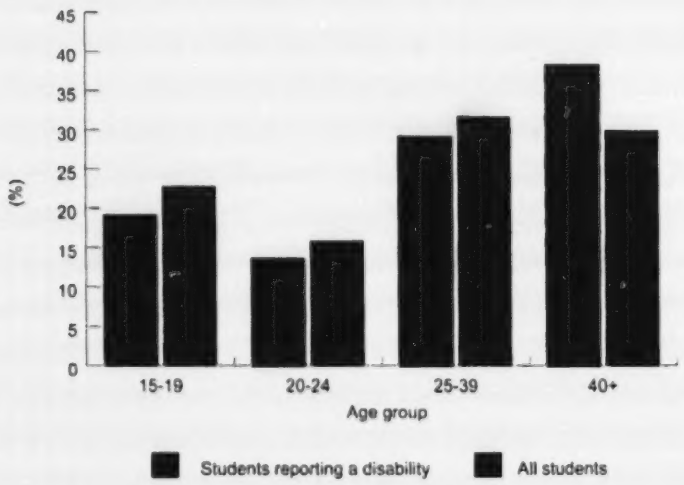
(a) Total disabilities is higher than the number of students reporting a disability as some students report more than one disability.
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 1996 and 2000

Student characteristics

Age

In 2000, students reporting a disability tended to be older than VET students overall, with 38% aged over 40 years (compared with 30% of all students). The proportion of students aged over 40 increased overall between 1996 and 2000, with both students reporting a disability, and all VET students, experiencing a proportional increase in this age group (from 34% and 25% respectively).

Figure 2: Proportion of VET students in selected age groups, 2000



Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 2000

Highest level of schooling

VET students who reported a disability in 2000 tended to have lower levels of schooling than VET students overall. Only 30% of students with a disability had achieved year 12 (compared with 43% of all VET students), 25% had an education level of year 9 or lower (compared with 12% of all VET students). These proportions were largely unchanged from 1996.

Table 3: Per cent of students with each level of schooling, 1996 and 2000

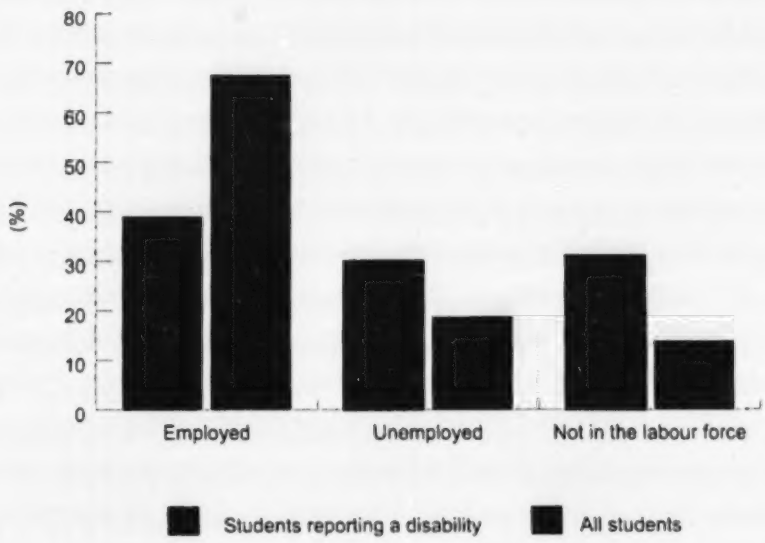
	1996		2000	
	Students reporting a disability	All students	Students reporting a disability	All students
Year 9 or lower	25	10	25	12
Year 10	33	28	32	29
Year 11	13	16	13	16
Year 12	29	46	30	43
Total(a)	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

(a) Only includes those students whose level of schooling is known.
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 1996 and 2000

Employment

VET students reporting a disability in 2000 were less likely to be employed than other VET students. More than 60% of VET students with a disability were either unemployed or not in the labour force, compared with 33% of all VET students.

Figure 3: Employment status of VET students, 2000



Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 2000

Training activity

Area of study

In 2000, over a quarter (27%) of VET students reporting a disability were enrolled in subjects from within the VET Multi-field education area of study (compared with 11% of all VET students). Multi-field education is not directly associated with a recognised 'field of study', but rather encompasses a range of enabling courses, addressing generic study, interpersonal and job-search skills.

The proportion of VET students reporting a disability engaged in VET Multi-field education decreased noticeably between 1996 and 2000 (from 47% to 27%), meaning that a greater proportion of VET students reporting a disability were enrolling in the main vocational fields of study. This may actually indicate the success of previous study in enabling programs. An NCVER study (Phan and Ball, 2001) found that, following enrolment in an enabling course, almost a third of those students who undertook further studies in the VET sector in the following year had undertaken a course at a higher level qualification.

In 2000, the popularity of different fields of study varied between male and female students. For male VET students reporting a disability, the most popular fields of study were: *Engineering, Surveying* (14% of students); *Business, Administration, Economics* (13% of students); *Services, Hospitality, Transportation* (9% of students); and *Science* (8% of students). Female VET students reporting a disability had a slightly different focus, favouring: *Business, Administration, Economics* (20% of students); *Health, Community services* (11% of students); *Art, Humanities & Social sciences* (10% of students); and *Services, Hospitality, Transportation* (9% of students).

Table 4: Per cent of students in each major field of study(a), 2000

	Students reporting a disability			All students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Land & Marine resources, Animal husbandry	7	2	5	8	3	5
Architicture, building	5	1	3	9	1	5
Art, Humanities & Soc Sciences	6	10	8	5	9	7
Business, Administration, Economics	13	20	17	15	27	21
Education	2	2	2	2	3	3
Engineering, Surveying	14	2	8	20	3	12
Health, Community services	5	11	8	5	11	8
Law, Legal studies	0	0	0	1	1	1
Science	8	6	7	7	7	7
Veterinary Science, Animal care	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services, Hospitality, Transportation	9	9	9	17	17	17
TAFE Multi-field education	26	28	27	10	13	11
Module only - no FOS	5	8	6	3	7	5
Total(b)	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

(a) Major fields of study are categories which encompass a range of related courses or training programs.
(b) Columns may not add to total due to rounding.
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 2000

Qualification

In 2000, VET students who reported having a disability were mostly studying a similar mix of qualifications to all VET students. However, a smaller proportion of VET students reporting a disability were studying at the AQF Certificate III level (16% compared with 20% of all VET students), and a larger proportion were studying at the AQF Certificate I level (12% compared with 5% of all VET students).

Table 5: Per cent of VET students in each qualification category, 2000

	Students reporting a disability			All students		
	Male	Female	Total(a)	Male	Female	Total(a)
AQF Diploma or higher	11	11	11	11	12	11
AGF Certificate IV or equivalent	9	9	9	10	10	10
AQF Certificate III or equivalent	17	15	16	22	18	20
AQF level unknown	2	2	2	2	2	2
AQF Certificate II	18	17	17	17	18	17
AQF Certificate I	13	11	12	5	4	5
Other recognised courses(b)	10	8	9	8	6	7
Non-award courses	17	18	18	22	24	23
Module only - no qualification	5	8	6	3	7	5
Total %(c)	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Students	33 133	28 910	62 082	884 932	857 929	1 749 364

(a) Includes students whose sex is not known
(b) Incudes AQF Senior secondary
(c) Columns may not add to total due to rounding
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 2000

Annual hours[2] spent on VET

In 2000, VET students reporting a disability undertook (on average) more hours of training than VET students overall (243 hours compared with 198 hours annually). This was in keeping with the higher proportion of VET students reporting a disability studying full-time in 2000 (12% compared with 9% of the total VET population).

[2] *Annual hours can be used as a measure of total delivery. They are based on the standard curriculum hours for each module when the module is undertaken in standard delivery mode, although some students undertake modules in self-paced learning, flexible delivery, or distance learning modes.*

Module (subject) outcomes

Students who report having a disability have been less likely to achieve successful module outcomes than other VET students. In 2000, 74% of students reporting a disability achieved successful subject outcomes compared with 80% of all VET students. While this proportion was an improvement from the 71% reported in 1996, there was a corresponding improvement in the proportion of successful outcomes for all students, meaning that the difference between the two groups was unchanged at six percentage points.

Over half of the unsuccessful outcomes for VET students reporting a disability in 2000 resulted from withdrawals (13% compared with 9% for all VET students). The proportion failing to successfully complete assessed subjects was only marginally higher than for all VET students (12% compared with 11% for all VET students).

Table 6: Outcomes of subject enrolments(a), 1996 and 2000

	1996		2000	
	Students reporting a disability	All students	Students reporting a disability	All students
	%	%	%	%
Total successful	***71.2***	***76.8***	***74.3***	***80.1***
Assessed subjects	60.4	65.5	60.8	66.6
Non-assessed subjects	6.6	6.1	7.9	6.7
RPL/Credit transfer	4.1	5.3	5.6	6.8
Total unsuccessful	***28.8***	***23.2***	***25.7***	***19.9***
Assessed subjects	6.0	5.1	11.7	10.8
Non-assessed subjects	8.8	7.2	0.7	0.4
Withdrawn	14.0	10.8	13.3	8.7
Total %	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Subject enrolments	313 376	8 464 051	455 169	12 292 717

(a) Percentages include only those subjects where the result was known (i.e. excludes subjects where the result was withheld, the student was continuing studies, or the result was not stated).
Source: NCVER National VET provider collection 1996 and 2000

TAFE graduate outcomes[3]

Students reporting a disability accounted for 4.5% of TAFE graduates in 2000 (where disability status was known); the same proportion as the number of VET students reporting a disability within the total VET population in that year. However, it represented a decrease of 1.8 percentage points from the proportion of TAFE graduates reporting a disability in 1996 (6.3%).

[3] Data on graduate outcomes is from the 2001 NCVER Student Outcomes Survey, which records responses from a sample of 2000 TAFE graduates.

Table 7: Per cent of (2000) graduates, by labour force status, before and after training

	Before training		After training(a)	
	Students reporting a disability	All students	Students reporting a disability	All students
Total employed(b)	**42.6**	**68.1**	**43.4**	**76**
Full-time	21.3	39.5	21.1	50.4
Part-time	19.6	26.6	19.9	23.3
Total not employed(c)	**57.4**	**31.9**	**56.6**	**24**
Unemployed	20.7	14.1	20.5	11.2
Not in labour force	28.7	17.1	34.7	12.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) At 25 May 2001.
(b) Includes 'employed (hours not stated)'
(c) Includes 'not employed (not further identified)'.
Source: NCVER, Student Outcomes Survey, 2001.

For those TAFE students with a disability who graduated in 2000, there was virtually no improvement in employment outcomes, with the proportion of graduates in employment remaining unchanged at 43%, both before and after training (at 25 May 2001). Given that the proportion of all TAFE graduates in employment increased from 68% before training to 76% after training, the ability of graduates with a disability to gain employment appears to be an issue of concern, and has been the focus of research with the NCVER.

Summary of NCVER research into employment and income outcomes for VET students with a disability

Research undertaken at NCVER reported in Ball and Phan, (1999) investigated:

- if there was any significant difference in the likelihood of members of disadvantaged groups securing employment following graduation from TAFE, after controlling for factors such as field of study and level of qualification attained, compared with other Australians;
- if there was any significant difference in the likelihood of members of disadvantaged groups achieving a 'positive outcome' after graduation from TAFE, after controlling for factors such as field of study and level of qualification attained, compared with other Australians;
- if members of disadvantaged groups who were successful in securing employment managed to achieve the same level of income as Australians as a whole, after controlling for factors such as field of study, occupation and level of qualification attained;

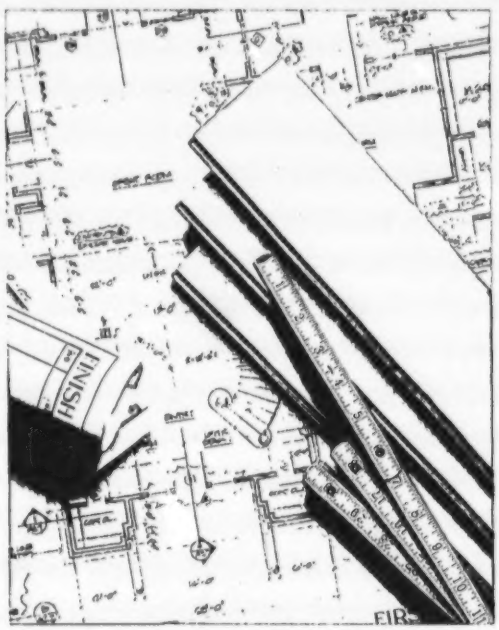
The interpretation of a 'positive outcome' used in this analysis was that either a TAFE graduate had secured employment by 30 May in the following year after the completion of a TAFE course or the graduate had enrolled in further studies.

Given the different distribution of courses undertaken by vocational students from most disadvantaged groups compared with other students, it could be construed that variations in employment and income outcomes for TAFE graduates were solely related to differences in the chosen field of study of the course taken at TAFE, the occupation after graduation and the level of qualification attained by members of disadvantaged groups compared with other Australians.

The results indicated that there was a significant difference in the likelihood of members of disadvantaged groups securing employment or achieving a 'positive outcome' following graduation from TAFE, after controlling for factors such as field of study and level of qualification attained, compared with other Australians. While field of study and level of qualification are important factors influencing the likelihood of new TAFE graduates securing employment or achieving a 'positive outcome', demographic factors are also important influences.

The key findings from the research that were relevant for students in VET with a disability are summarised as follows:

- New TAFE graduates who reported in the survey that they had a disability were significantly less likely to obtain employment compared to other new TAFE graduates.
- There was less likelihood of new TAFE graduates who reported in the survey that they had a disability achieving a 'positive outcome' compared to other new TAFE graduates.
- Students with a disability who were successful in securing employment after graduation from TAFE did not achieve the same level of income as Australians as a whole, after controlling for factors such as field of study, occupation and level of qualification attained.
- New TAFE graduates who reported in the survey that they had a disability obtained significantly lower income at 30 May in the year following completion of a TAFE course compared to other new TAFE graduates.
- There were significant differences in the likelihood of securing employment and in the remuneration received by new TAFE graduates depending on the field of study of the course studied at TAFE. With the exception of '*Art, humanities and social sciences*', '*Science*', and '*VET Multi-field education*' field of study classifications there was a significantly greater likelihood of recent TAFE graduates being employed if they had taken courses from all other field of study courses compared to the reference group. For graduates who had studied courses from the '*Art, humanities and social sciences*', '*Science*', and '*VET Multi-field education*' field of study classifications there was a significantly reduced likelihood of being employed by 30 May in the year following the completion of TAFE studies.



Outcomes for apprentices and trainees

In general, students with a disability who were in an apprenticeship or traineeship during their VET course achieved more positive post-course employment outcomes than students with a disability who were not engaged in a contract of training.

Regression modelling was conducted by NCVER to assess if demographic factors affect the likelihood of continued employment with the same employer, or with a different employer, after the completion of an apprenticeship. The modelling methodology took account of differences in field of study, level of qualification, length of training course, type of training (apprenticeship or traineeship), age of apprentice or trainee, industry of employment, highest previous qualification, occupation, and type and size of employer (government or private sector).

Although apprentices with a disability were 20 per cent less likely to be with the same employer after the completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship than other apprentices and trainees, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of an apprentice or trainee who reported having a disability continuing in employment with a different employer after the completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship than other apprentices or trainees.

Students with disabilities who undertook lower level or enabling courses were less likely to be undertaking further studies when they completed their course compared with other students (Ball and Phan, 2001).

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